

Kosovo Conflict Chronology: September 1998- March 1999

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ABSTRACT

This report chronicles major events regarding the violent conflict in Kosovo, a region in Serbia with a majority ethnic Albanian population, from September 1998 through March 1999. During this period, a cease-fire was brokered in October 1998, but was frequently violated by both sides. In mid-January 1999, a massacre of ethnic Albanian civilians by Serbian police prompted renewed international attention to the Kosovo problem, and led to peace talks in February and March. NATO planned to deploy a peacekeeping force in Kosovo once an agreement was reached. Continued Serbian rejection of the agreement led NATO to launch an extended air strike campaign against Yugoslav targets on March 24. Air strikes did not deter Serb forces from their onslaught in Kosovo, driving hundreds of thousands of refugees into neighboring countries. Other CRS reports relating to this topic include CRS Issue Brief 98041, *Kosovo and U.S. Policy*, CRS Issue Brief 93056, *Bosnia and Kosovo: U.S. Military Operations*, and CRS Report 98-752, *Kosovo Conflict Chronology: January-August 1998*. This report will not be updated.

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Kosovo is a province in southern Serbia with a majority Albanian population that seeks independence. Long-simmering tensions between the Serbian government authorities and the ethnic Albanian majority in Kosovo erupted into large-scale violence beginning in February 1998. An October 1998 agreement brokered by U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke with Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, and backed by the threat of NATO air strikes, achieved a brief pause in the fighting. A January 1999 massacre of ethnic Albanian civilians in Racak prompted renewed international focus on the situation in Kosovo and on negotiations to resolve the conflict. By this time, an estimated 2,000 persons, mainly ethnic Albanians, had been killed and over 350,000 had been made refugees.

Negotiations opened in Rambouillet, France, in early February 1999. The Rambouillet accords would provide for a three-year interim agreement on democratic self-government for the people of Kosovo. The accords would establish political institutions and offices in Kosovo, free elections, and human rights provisions. A NATO military force would ensure compliance with the accords and provide a secure environment. The United States pledged to contribute up to 4,000 troops to a NATO-led peacekeeping force, a smaller share than in the NATO force in Bosnia. Kosovo would not achieve independence from Serbia under the accords; however, at the end of the three year period, an international conference would determine a mechanism for a final settlement for Kosovo.

In contrast to earlier expectations, the Kosovar Albanian delegation retained objections to aspects of the accords and refused to sign the agreement during the Rambouillet conference. It finally signed the agreement on March 18, after the conference briefly reconvened in Paris. In spite of numerous international missions to Belgrade by western officials, including U.S. envoy Holbrooke, President Milosevic continued to refuse to consider the deployment of NATO troops on Serbian territory and instead mobilized greater numbers of troops in Kosovo.

On March 24, NATO launched Operation “Allied Force,” an extensive air strike campaign against Yugoslav military targets. The air operation aimed to deter Serbian attacks on Kosovo and to reduce Belgrade’s military capabilities. In a national address, President Clinton stated that ending the Kosovo tragedy was both a “moral imperative” and important to U.S. national interests. However, Yugoslav and Serb forces stepped up their ethnic cleansing campaigns to drive out ethnic Albanians, creating a refugee and humanitarian crisis affecting neighboring states. By the end of the month, some observers questioned whether additional measures, such as the introduction of ground troops, should be considered.

This report provides a chronology of major events related to the conflict in Kosovo from September 1998 through March 1999. It continues from an earlier CRS Report, *Kosovo Conflict Chronology: January - August 1998*. A map is included.

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Kosovo Conflict Chronology: September 1998 - March 1999¹

Chronology

09/02/98 -- U.S. Balkans envoy Christopher Hill, the U.S. Ambassador to Macedonia, after meeting separately with the Serbian government and leaders of the Kosovo Albanians, reported that the two sides were in general agreement on a basic autonomy peace framework that would postpone final settlement of the legal status of Kosovo for an interim period of about three years.²

-- In Moscow, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov issued a joint statement demanding an end to the attacks in Kosovo and a start to an intensified negotiation process.

09/03/98 -- Fighting between Serbian police and ethnic Albanian separatists was reported in several areas in Kosovo. Near Prizren, in southern Kosovo, local journalists reported that 35 Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) rebels and five Serbian policemen were killed.

09/06/98 -- Speaking at the end of a two-day mission to Kosovo, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State John Shattuck, traveling with former U.S. presidential candidate Bob Dole, reported that they had seen "horrendous human rights violations, violations of humanitarian law, and acts of punitive destruction on a massive scale."

09/10/98 -- NATO and Partnership for Peace (PFP) countries began a week-long training exercise in Macedonia, Cooperative Best Effort 98. The exercise focused on training infantry in a peacekeeping scenario. Over 26 countries participated.

09/16/98 -- At a news conference, President Clinton stated that the United States and its allies should move forthrightly to avert a humanitarian disaster in Kosovo,

¹Sources for this chronology include news wire service reports, press releases and briefings from international organizations and government agencies, major U.S. newspapers and journal articles, the *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* reports, and the *Facts on File* World News Digest. For additional background and analysis on events in Kosovo and U.S. policy, see CRS Issue Brief 98041, *Kosovo and U.S. Policy*, updated regularly.

²Kosovo (Kosova in Albanian) is a province within Serbia. Following the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia in 1991, the republics of Serbia and Montenegro in 1992 formed the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY); this entity has not been formally recognized by the United States.

citing the estimated 50,000-100,000 displaced persons in Kosovo without shelter for the upcoming winter.

09/18/98 -- The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said that about 10,000 additional persons had fled their homes as a result of Serb attacks on about one dozen Kosovo villages north of Pristina.

09/22/98 -- Serbian police authorities announced the start of a major offensive against the Albanian separatist guerillas in the northern part of Kosovo.

-- U.S. envoy Hill visited the Kosovo countryside south of Pristina and reported no signs of displaced persons returning to shelter. In contrast, Serbian President Milan Milutinovic, after his own tour of the province, stated that "life was normal" in Kosovo.

09/23/98 -- The U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 1199 on the situation in Kosovo by a vote of 14 in favor, 0 against, with China abstaining. Acting under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter (dealing with threats to peace and acts of aggression), Security Council members demanded that all parties cease hostilities immediately and take steps to improve the humanitarian situation on the ground. They called upon the Serbian and Albanian parties to enter immediately into a dialogue on a negotiated political solution. The resolution made four demands on Belgrade: cease hostilities against the civilian population and withdraw security units used for civilian repression; enable international monitoring in Kosovo; facilitate refugee returns; and make progress on reaching a dialogue with the Albanian parties. The resolution did not threaten force or impose new sanctions on Serbia.

-- In Kosovo, Yugoslav army units continued a tank and artillery offensive on villages to the north of Pristina.

09/26/98 -- In the town of Gornje Obrinje, west of Pristina, Serbian police units were believed to have killed about 19 ethnic Albanians, mainly women and children, belonging to a single family clan. The act was considered to be in retaliation for the killing of seven Serb policemen by Albanian guerrillas in the same area. Additional deaths were reported in other villages in the Drenica region. The killings prompted expressions of outrage in many countries.

09/28/98 -- Serbian Prime Minister Mirko Marjanovic claimed victory over the Albanian guerrilla forces in Kosovo and announced that Serbian special police forces would carry out a cease-fire and be withdrawn from the province. Hours later, however, western diplomats reported heavy attacks by Serbian forces in southern Kosovo.

10/01/98 -- International media reported that several hundred Serbian police and Yugoslav army troops were in the process of pulling out of Kosovo.

10/05/98 -- U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke returned to Belgrade to warn Yugoslav President Milosevic that NATO air strikes were imminent if Yugoslavia continued to refuse to comply with U.N. resolutions. Milosevic claimed that Yugoslavia was

already in compliance. Holbrooke met with Milosevic again the following day, without results.

-- In a report to the Security Council, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan strongly criticized Serbia's use of terror and violence against Albanian civilians. However, absent a significant U.N. presence on the ground, Annan stated that he could not provide an independent assessment of Serb or Albanian compliance with U.N. resolutions.

10/07/98 -- Richard Holbrooke held another round of talks with President Milosevic in Belgrade, but reported no progress. Holbrooke then traveled to Brussels to report to NATO. In Brussels, NATO officials stated that the alliance was prepared to carry out air strikes against Serbia. In Washington, President Clinton directed the U.S. representative to NATO to vote in favor of authorizing air strikes. Clinton stated that NATO air strikes could only be avoided if Milosevic fully complied with U.N. demands.

10/08/98 -- After a meeting of the six-member Contact Group (the United States, Britain, France, Russia, Germany, and Italy) in London, Contact Group foreign ministers agreed to send U.S. envoy Holbrooke back to Belgrade for a last-ditch effort to avert NATO air strikes. In Brussels, NATO ambassadors approved plans for phased air operations in Yugoslavia, the final step prior to issuing the "activation order" for air strikes. Many European states remained hesitant about authorizing the use of force by NATO without specific authorization by the U.N. Security Council.

10/13/98 -- NATO gave the "activation order" to authorize air strikes against Yugoslavia if President Milosevic did not withdraw his security forces from Kosovo within four days. The order conferred authority to NATO SACEUR Gen. Wesley Clark to launch air operations if international demands were not met.

-- After several more hours of meetings with President Milosevic on October 12 and October 13, U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke announced that Milosevic had pledged full compliance with U.N. demands, including withdrawing army and police forces, allowing refugees to return home, and providing access to aid organizations. He also agreed to international ground and air verification of Yugoslav compliance with U.N. resolutions on Kosovo. Holbrooke said that ground compliance would be carried out by up to 2,000 "verifiers" provided by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Aerial verification would be carried out by NATO non-combat reconnaissance flights. The accord appeared to remove the immediate threat of NATO air strikes.

-- The Serbian government issued a "unilateral statement" that outlined a political framework and timetable for establishing an autonomous solution for Kosovo. The statement emphasized that any solution for Kosovo must respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). The government pledged to hold free elections in Kosovo within nine months and to devolve policing authorities to the local level.

10/15/98 -- Meeting in Paris, Contact Group representatives reviewed the commitments made by President Milosevic and discussed plans for implementing the observer missions and launching political negotiations.

-- In Belgrade, NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana and SACEUR Gen. Wesley Clark signed an agreement with President Milosevic to establish the NATO/Kosovo Air Verification Mission, to be operated by NATO. The NATO officials told Milosevic that they were "still far" from seeing full compliance by Serbia on pulling back its forces from Kosovo. Solana said that 4,000-5,000 Yugoslav army and 4,000 special police units needed to be withdrawn from the province for Yugoslavia to be in compliance. He said that NATO remained ready and willing to act if Milosevic's obligations were not met.

10/16/98 -- NATO extended its deadline for Milosevic to pull back his forces from Kosovo for an additional ten-day period, or until October 27. While compliance remained unsatisfactory, NATO officials stated that evidence of partial compliance warranted the extension of the deadline. Over 400 NATO aircraft stood ready to engage in air operations.

-- FRY and OSCE representatives signed an agreement establishing a 2,000-strong Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) in Kosovo. OSCE later appointed U.S. diplomat William Walker to head the KVM.

10/17/98 -- UCK units reportedly killed three Serbian police officers in central Kosovo. In response, Belgrade deployed two armored army units to the region.

10/22/98 -- NATO formally approved its aerial surveillance mission over Kosovo.

10/24/98 -- The U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 1203, by a vote of 13-0, with Russia and China abstaining. Acting under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, the Security Council endorsed the verification agreements made by the FRY with NATO and the OSCE. It demanded that the FRY and Kosovo Albanian leadership comply with previous U.N. resolutions and cooperate fully with the international verification missions. It called on the FRY to implement its commitment to complete negotiations on a framework for a political settlement by November 2.

10/26/98 -- International media sources reported that thousands of Yugoslav interior ministry troops were heading out of Kosovo. The withdrawals came after more meetings between Yugoslav leaders and NATO officials on October 24 and 25. President Milosevic reportedly agreed to withdraw 4,500 interior ministry troops and to order two-thirds of Yugoslav army units to their garrisons.

10/27/98 -- In view of Belgrade's "substantial compliance" on withdrawals, NATO suspended its immediate threat of ordering air strikes on Serbia when the ultimatum expired. However, NATO Secretary-General Solana announced that NATO would maintain its activation order for air strikes and remain prepared to carry out air operations. State Department officials later said that about 4,000 Serbian special police forces had withdrawn from Kosovo, leaving about 10,000 special police, roughly the same amount that was in the province before February 1998. About 4,000 Yugoslav army forces had also withdrawn, leaving about 13,000 in

Kosovo. By this time, roughly 150 OSCE monitors had arrived in Kosovo. Humanitarian agencies reported that thousands of the 280,000 total number of refugees were beginning to return to their homes.

11/02/98 -- A draft of the interim autonomy plan presented by Ambassador Hill was rejected President Milosevic, ethnic Albanian leaders, and representatives of Kosovo's Serb minority. The Milosevic-Holbrooke agreement from mid-October reportedly set a November 2 deadline for reaching agreement on an autonomy deal.

11/05/98 -- Yugoslav President Milosevic barred U.N. war crimes investigators from entering Kosovo. The U.N. investigation team was to look into specific allegations of war crimes committed by both the Serbian and Albanian sides in Kosovo. U.N. tribunal and NATO officials harshly criticized Belgrade's position.

11/11/98 -- OSCE KVM leader William Walker arrived in Kosovo. Roughly 200 KVM verifiers were in place in Kosovo by this time. Serbian police units returned to villages in the Drenica region, allegedly in response to KLA attacks on Serbian police outposts.

11/13/98 -- UNHCR estimated that over 100,000 persons remained displaced in Kosovo, while about 65,000 had returned to their homes. In addition, an estimated 45,000 Kosovo Albanians were in Montenegro; 20,000 elsewhere in Serbia; 20,000 in Albania; and over 50,000 in various western European countries. However, UNHCR estimated that no group remained completely without shelter in the forests, as had been the case prior to the cease-fire.

11/17/98 -- The U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 1207 by a vote of 14-0, with China abstaining, regarding cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. Resolution 1207 condemned the FRY's failure to comply with U.N. demands on full cooperation with the Tribunal. The resolution also condemned the FRY for failing to arrest and transfer three individuals indicted by the Tribunal.

11/18/98 -- A Serbian delegation led by President Milan Milutinovic arrived in Pristina in order to begin talks with Kosovo Albanian leaders. Key Albanian leaders, including Ibrahim Rugova and members of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), stayed away, claiming that the meeting was a propaganda ploy by Belgrade. The meeting followed weeks of shuttle diplomacy by U.S. envoy Chris Hill and EU envoy Wolfgang Petritsch, the Austrian ambassador to Belgrade.

11/20/98 -- At a press conference with NATO Secretary-General Solana, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright stated that both the Serbian and Kosovo Albanian sides continued to violate the cease-fire. She said that President Milosevic was increasing rather than decreasing the number of Serbian special police (MUP) forces in Kosovo. On this day, the KLA allegedly killed two Serbian policemen in an ambush of a police vehicle.

11/21/98 -- The Serbian government released a draft peace plan for Kosovo as a counter-proposal to the version presented by Ambassador Hill. The Serbian counter-

plan was reportedly formulated as a result of talks between the Serbian government and minority groups in Kosovo, excluding the Kosovo Albanians.

11/24/98 -- FRY President Milosevic fired Yugoslav Army Chief of Staff General Momcilo Perisic. The move, just weeks after Milosevic had fired the head of the state security services, was viewed by analysts as another step in Milosevic's effort to quell potential internal dissent to his policies.

12/01/98 -- U.S. State Department spokesman Jamie Rubin pronounced at a regular press briefing that Yugoslav President Milosevic was "not simply part of the problem," but rather was "the problem," and named him responsible for all of the crises in the former Yugoslavia in recent years, including the crisis in Kosovo.

12/03/98 -- Ambassador Chris Hill presented a revised draft of the autonomy plan for Kosovo to Serbian President Milutinovic in Belgrade, and to the ethnic Albanian negotiating team in Pristina on the following day. Both sides later expressed dissatisfaction with aspects of the plan.

-- Meeting in Oslo, representatives of OSCE member states pledged to commit unarmed observers to the OSCE's Kosovo Verification Mission. About 500 verifiers were already in place in Kosovo.

-- In three separate incidents, 12 persons were killed in clashes between ethnic Albanians and Yugoslav forces, marking the worst deterioration of the October case-fire to date.

12/04/98 -- NATO approved the creation of a small, over-the-horizon extraction force to provide emergency security for the OSCE KVM mission. The roughly 2,000-strong force was to be based in Macedonia and under French command.

12/07/98 -- Serbian Deputy Prime Minister Tomislav Nikolic threatened to restart a full offensive against the KLA if the rebel force did not stop its surprise attacks on Serbian police units.

-- Ethnic Albanian negotiators rejected the latest version of Ambassador Hill's interim autonomy plan. Serb negotiators also rejected the draft on the following day.

12/10/98 -- The OSCE-run Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) was officially launched in Kosovo, taking over for the Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission (KDOM). U.S. Ambassador William Walker, heading the KVM, estimated that all of the 2,000 unarmed KVM force would be in place by the end of January 1999.

-- Serb officials and Albanian negotiators continued to object to the latest version of the peace agreement to the U.S. and EU negotiators. The following day, U.S. envoy Christopher Hill indicated that he would terminate the shuttle diplomacy process between the two sides.

12/14/98 -- Yugoslav army troops ambushed a group of KLA members crossing into Kosovo from Albania and reportedly seized from them a large quantity of

weaponry. The deadliest clash since the October cease-fire resulted in over 30 KLA deaths. In a separate incident, Albanian gunmen killed six Serbs in a bar in the town of Pec.

12/15/98 -- U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke returned to Belgrade to discuss with President Milosevic options for reviving peace talks with the Kosovo Albanians. No progress was reported after the talks.

12/17/98 -- Zvonko Bojanic, the Serbian Deputy Mayor of Kosovo, was kidnapped and executed in a village near Pristina. KLA representatives denied responsibility for the act, but the attack was reportedly carried out by persons wearing KLA insignia. Fighting was also reported in several western Kosovo villages.

12/24/98 -- In an apparent retaliation for the killing of the Serbian official, Yugoslav tanks and troops attacked an ethnic Albanian stronghold around Podujevo, north of Pristina. The following day, KVM chief William Walker brokered a partial pull-back of forces from both sides.

12/27/98 -- After a brief lull, fighting resumed in the Podujevo area. Kosovo Albanian rebels attacked a Serbian police post and ambushed police units entering Kosovo from outside the province. KVM monitors restored the local cease-fire the following day.

01/08/99 -- The KLA took eight Yugoslav Army soldiers hostage near the northern town of Podujevo. The Yugoslav Army reinforced its forces around the area in response.

01/13/99 -- The eight Yugoslav Army soldiers were released by ethnic Albanian guerrillas through an agreement reached with OSCE mediators. Although the terms of the deal remained secret, western officials stated that the Yugoslav side had agreed to release nine ethnic Albanian prisoners within ten days.

01/15/99 -- At least 45 ethnic Albanians, including women and children, were found killed by close-range shootings in the village of Racak. KVM chief Walker placed responsibility for the attack on Serbian security forces. The Serbian government claimed that the police had returned fire on armed terrorists. OSCE observers speculated that the massacre was in retaliation for the death of a Serbian police officer. The massacre elicited many expressions of condemnation abroad. President Clinton condemned the massacre of the civilians, calling it a deliberate and indiscriminate act of murder.

01/17/99 -- NATO ambassadors held an emergency meeting in response to the Racak killings.

01/18/99 -- U.N. war crimes prosecutor Louise Arbour was denied entry into the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia by Yugoslav guards on the border with Macedonia. Arbour was en route to investigate the killings at Racak days earlier. Arbour returned to the Hague two days later without visiting Kosovo.

-- The Yugoslav government declared OSCE KVM chief Walker to be *persona non grata* and demanded that he leave the territory of Yugoslavia within 48 hours. The government charged that Walker's activities went beyond the mandate of the KVM mission. In Racak, Serbian police removed the bodies of the more than 40 victims from a mosque and transferred them to Pristina for examination.

01/19/99 -- NATO Supreme Allied Commander Gen. Wesley Clark and Military Committee chief Gen. Klaus Naumann held talks with President Milosevic in Belgrade. They reportedly demanded that Milosevic uphold his October commitments, including pulling back his forces from Kosovo, or face air strikes. However, Milosevic rebuffed NATO's threats of intervention, although he extended the deadline for Ambassador Walker's expulsion by an additional 24 hours.

-- Yugoslav Army and Serbian police units attacked ethnic Albanian villages around Racak for the third day.

-- The U.N. Security Council issued a statement on Kosovo after holding an emergency session at the request of Albania. The Council condemned the massacre at Racak. It deplored Belgrade's denial of access to U.N. prosecutor Arbour. The Council expressed full support for the OSCE mission in Kosovo, now with about 800 international verifiers.

01/21/99 -- Partially responding to international demands, President Milosevic "froze" the expulsion order on OSCE chief Walker. The OSCE issued a report on Racak that concluded that the killing of the unarmed ethnic Albanian civilians was likely an act of revenge by Serbian forces.

01/22/99 -- Diplomats from the Contact Group in London announced that Contact Group foreign ministers would meet the following week to endorse a draft peace agreement and to call for the start of political negotiations. Officials said that shuttle diplomacy was no longer effective and that talks should be brought to a higher profile.

01/23/99 -- Serbian authorities freed nine ethnic Albanian prisoners in return for the release of eight Yugoslav Army soldiers some weeks earlier.

01/24/99 -- Writing in *Newsweek* magazine, KVM chief Walker repeated the charge that the Racak victims were "unquestionably killed by units of the Serb security forces."

01/25/99 -- In Brussels, European Union foreign ministers continued to discuss recent efforts to facilitate a political settlement. In Pristina, U.S. envoy Hill met with ethnic Albanian leaders to press them to unite behind the Contact Group's draft peace proposal.

01/26/99 -- For the first time, U.S. officials left open the possibility that the Administration would consider sending U.S. troops to Kosovo as part of a peacekeeping force. National Security Advisor Samuel "Sandy" Berger stated that although President Clinton was still opposed to sending U.S. troops to Kosovo, "no decisions" had yet been made. Secretary of State Albright, meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, stated that peacekeeping options would be examined.

-- In Presidential Determination No. 99-10, President Clinton authorized up to \$25 million in humanitarian assistance for refugees, displaced persons, and other victims of the conflict in Kosovo.

01/27/99 -- Clinton Administration officials announced that the United States had reached agreement with its allies on a two-track strategy to pursue at the January 29 meeting of the Contact Group. The agreed strategy was to press for immediate negotiations on a political settlement while exercising a credible threat of military force through NATO.

01/28/99 -- In a speech at NATO headquarters in Brussels, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan gave emphasis to the “lessons of Bosnia” and “the combination of force and diplomacy that is the key to peace in the Balkans.” News media interpreted Annan’s speech as an expression of support for NATO’s threat of force to bring Serbia to peace negotiations.

-- The North Atlantic Council decided to increase NATO’s military preparedness for possible air operations. NATO Secretary-General Solana stated that NATO stood “ready to act” and that no option was ruled out. NATO demanded that both parties halt fighting and agree to the interim political settlement proposed by the Contact Group.

-- *The Washington Post* reported that telephone intercepts by western intelligence agencies revealed conversations between senior Serbian political and military officials regarding the Racak massacre. Transcripts of the conversations reportedly implicated top Serbian officials in the Racak killings themselves and in the subsequent attempt to shield them from outside investigation.

01/29/99 -- After meeting in London, Foreign Ministers of the Contact Group summoned representatives of the Serbian/FRY and Kosovo Albanian parties to attend peace negotiations at Rambouillet, France, by February 6. The Contact Group stated that the negotiations should conclude within seven days, with the possibility of a second week’s extension. The Contact Group demanded that the FRY stop all offensive actions in Kosovo, comply fully with relevant agreements and U.N. resolutions, and cooperate fully with the OSCE and with the war crimes tribunal. The Contact Group also condemned provocations by the KLA and demanded that the Kosovo Albanians comply with relevant U.N. resolutions.

01/30/99 -- On behalf of the Contact Group, U.K. Foreign Secretary Robin Cook met separately with Yugoslav and Kosovo Albanian leaders to urge them to heed the Contact Group’s summons to peace talks at Rambouillet.

-- The North Atlantic Council authorized the NATO Secretary-General engage in air strikes against targets in the FRY. It reaffirmed NATO’s readiness to engage in military operations and also expressed support for the political negotiations set forth by the Contact Group. Regarding the KLA, NATO said it would take “all appropriate measures” if the Kosovar Albanian side failed to comply with international demands.

02/02/99 -- After holding a meeting among commanders, KLA leaders agreed to participate in the Contact Group-sponsored talks. However, one influential Kosovo Albanian leader, Adem Demaci, pleaded for a rejection of the negotiation proposal.

-- Before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet testified that spring was likely to bring more fighting in Kosovo. He predicted that the violence would be bloodier than in the past year and likely to broaden out to neighboring states.

02/03/99 -- Before the Senate Armed Services committee, Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Gen. Henry Shelton said that preliminary plans foresaw between 2,000 and 4,000 U.S. troops participating in a NATO force in Kosovo totaling up to 30,000 troops. Defense Secretary William Cohen stated that U.S. participation in such a force was necessary in the eyes of the European allies and of the Kosovo Albanian population.

02/04/99 -- In separate addresses, President Clinton and Secretary of State Albright provided arguments in favor of U.S. participation in a future NATO peacekeeping force in Kosovo. Secretary Albright stated that the United States had a fundamental interest in peace and stability in southeastern Europe. She said that violent conflict in that region had no natural borders and could easily spread to other states and affect NATO allies. President Clinton said that the time to stop the conflict in Kosovo was now, before it spread.

-- The Yugoslav government agreed to attend peace talks at Rambouillet scheduled to begin two days later. However, the Serbian parliament approved a statement that said it did "not accept the presence of foreign soldiers on our territory."

02/06/99 -- French President Jacques Chirac opened the Kosovo peace conference opened at a 14th century chateau at Rambouillet, France. French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine and British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook co-chaired the conference. The start of the talks was briefly postponed for the late arrival of KLA members of the Kosovo Albanian delegation. The Serbian government had temporarily denied travel documents to the three KLA members. At Rambouillet, the FRY was represented by a 13-member delegation. Sixteen Kosovar Albanians represented the other side. The peace conference was to conclude within two weeks.

-- A bomb exploded in downtown Pristina, killing three ethnic Albanian civilians. OSCE mission chief Walker said that the timing of the explosion with the start of the Rambouillet talks was "no coincidence."

02/09/99 -- Yugoslav Foreign Minister Zivadin Jovanovic firmly reiterated Yugoslavia's opposition to the possible deployment of NATO peacekeepers in Kosovo. In response, State Department spokesman Jamie Rubin warned that, if the Albanians agreed to the Contact Group plan and Yugoslavia did not, the Serbs would be subject to air strikes.

-- In the first press briefing after the start of the Rambouillet conference, the team of three international negotiators (Ambassador Chris Hill of the United

States, Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch representing the EU, and Ambassador Boris Mayorsky of Russia) reported that the talks were “moving ahead,” but cited no concrete progress.

02/10/99 -- NATO ambassadors approved an accelerated timetable for the deployment of an international peacekeeping force for Kosovo. The plans reportedly involved a swift deployment of an advance rapid reaction force, or “enabling force,” within days of a peace settlement.

-- Serbian authorities released the bodies of 40 ethnic Albanians killed at Racak in January. The bodies were returned to their families after being held by Serbian authorities for autopsies for nearly a month.

02/12/99 -- Peace conference co-chairmen British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook and French Foreign Minister Herbert Vedrine returned to Rambouillet at the midpoint of the talks. Secretary Cook stated that the Serb delegation was blocking progress.

02/13/99 -- During his weekly radio address, President Clinton stated that the United States would participate with 2,000-4,000 U.S. troops in a future NATO peacekeeping force in Kosovo, should the parties reach a strong peace agreement.

02/14/99 -- The Contact Group extended the Rambouillet conference into its second week. A statement by the Contact Group acknowledged that “progress has been slower” than expected and warned that “time (was) now very short to reach a negotiated settlement.” The Contact Group urged the parties to agree on the proposals for Kosovo’s self-government and to accept the implementation arrangements included in the proposals.

02/15/99 -- At a news conference at Rambouillet, Serbian President Milan Milutinovic rejected the notion of any foreign troops on Yugoslav soil, stating that “if the agreement is good and fair...no foreign force is necessary to make them implement it.”

02/16/99 -- U.S. envoy Christopher Hill flew to Belgrade to meet with Yugoslav President Milosevic in an attempt to make progress on the issue of the NATO peacekeeping presence. Milosevic continued to refuse to accept a future NATO deployment on Yugoslav soil. In Washington, Secretary of State Albright called such a position a “deal-breaker,” and warned that it would be “followed by NATO bombings.”

02/19/99 -- Key Kosovar Albanian leader Hashim Thaci met with Adem Demaci, the KLA’s political representative who refused to attend the Rambouillet talks, in Slovenia. Demaci reportedly urged Thaci to take a hard-line stance on the Kosovar Albanian demands.

02/20/99 -- Contact Group foreign ministers extended the deadline for the conclusion of the Rambouillet talks for three additional days, until Tuesday afternoon, February 23. U.S. Secretary of State Albright stated that the NATO-led force

component of the peace agreement was essential; without it, the agreement was “just a piece of paper.”

02/21/99 -- With Serb agreement appearing extremely doubtful, Contact Group negotiators reportedly concentrated their attentions on achieving Kosovar Albanian agreement to the Rambouillet accords. Without agreement by the Albanian side, Secretary Albright predicted that there would be no NATO air strikes against Serbia.

02/22/99 -- Secretary of State Albright spent most of the day in talks with the Kosovar Albanian delegation. Among other items, the Kosovar Albanian delegation reportedly objected to the absence of the word “referendum” in the peace agreement. The draft agreement called for an international conference at the end of the three-year interim period to determine the “will of the people.” NATO SACEUR Gen. Wesley Clark flew to a military airfield near Rambouillet and met briefly with the Albanian delegation.

02/23/99 -- UNHCR officials warned that recent fighting in northwest Kosovo had forced thousands of ethnic Albanians to flee their homes. UNHCR estimated that about 9,000 additional persons had been displaced over the previous weekend.

-- Shortly after the deadline for the Rambouillet conference had expired, the Kosovar Albanian delegation conditionally accepted the peace proposal. Though it did not sign the draft peace plan, the delegation signed a declaration that said it could sign the agreement after a two-week period for consultations back in Kosovo. U.S. officials expressed relief at the Albanians’ last-minute acceptance.

-- The Serbian delegation issued a statement that called for further negotiations. It continued to reject a NATO-led military force in Kosovo but stated that Yugoslavia would consider “the size and character of an international presence in Kosovo for the implementation of an agreement.”

-- Adjourning the talks at Rambouillet, the Contact Group issued a statement that said that the parties had reached “consensus” on substantial autonomy for Kosovo. It said that the parties agreed to reconvene in France on March 15 to discuss all aspects of implementation. It called on the parties to uphold the cease-fire, abstain from all provocative actions, and abide by the commitments made in the October 1998 agreement. Western officials claimed partial success; they said that while the parties had made “substantial progress” at Rambouillet, a final agreement had not been reached. Western media reported that Contact Group countries had been surprised by and unprepared for Kosovar Albanian resistance at the Rambouillet conference.

02/25/99 -- Under Secretary of Defense Walter Slocombe told the Senate Armed Services committee that the possible deployment of up to 4,000 U.S. troops to a NATO-led peacekeeping force in Kosovo would cost \$1.5 to \$2 billion per year.

02/26/99 -- The U.S. Department of Defense stated that the Yugoslav Army had massed about 4,500 troops along the Kosovo border. A week later that figure increased to about 10,000 troops.

-- Western media later reported that Yugoslav officials had detained 21 OSCE monitors near the Kosovo border with Macedonia. During the time of their detention, NATO troops stationed in Macedonia were placed on a high state of alert. In response, Yugoslav army units were dispatched to the region. The situation was defused after the monitors were released.

03/01/99 -- After meeting with President Milosevic OSCE Chair-in-Office and Norwegian Foreign Minister Knut Vollebaek reported that the Yugoslav leader had flatly rejected the possibility of allowing an international military presence into Kosovo. Vollebaek reportedly tried to emphasize the prospective non-NATO participation in the future force as well as the U.N.'s role in authorizing the force. U.S. envoy Christopher Hill met with ethnic Albanian leaders to urge their final acceptance of the peace accords. Hill afterward expressed optimism that the Albanian delegation would sign the agreement.

-- The State Department announced that former Senate majority leader Bob Dole had accepted Secretary Albright's request to meet with the parties of the conflict.

03/02/99 -- The KLA designated Hashim Thaci leader of a provisional Kosovar government. The move appeared to sideline further the leadership of Ibrahim Rugova, the self-styled President of Kosovo since 1992. The following day, Adem Demaci resigned from his position as political advisor to the KLA. Demaci again rejected the Rambouillet accords.

03/05/99 -- Former Senator Bob Dole met with members of the ethnic Albanian delegation in Macedonia, rather than in Kosovo. Dole urged the Albanian delegation to sign the peace accords, calling them the "best possible deal." Hashim Thaci did not attend the meeting with Dole.

03/08/99 -- After a long meeting with U.S. envoy Christopher Hill in Pristina, the KLA agreed to accept the Rambouillet peace agreement.

03/09/99 -- U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke arrived in Belgrade for further meetings with President Milosevic. Holbrooke said that he was going to remind Milosevic of the consequences of his continued refusal to accept the peace agreement. He warned that Yugoslavia and the West were on a "collision course" that could lead to NATO intervention.

03/10/99 -- The Republican leadership of the U.S. House of Representatives rejected a plea by the Administration to put off debate on a legislative proposal on authorizing U.S. peacekeeping forces in Kosovo. Secretary of State Albright had expressed concern about the timing of the debate, as efforts were under way to get the parties to sign on to the agreement, especially if the vote opposed such an authorization. House Speaker Dennis Hastert rejected this argument.

-- The House International Relations Committee held a hearing on U.S. policy on Kosovo, with Robert Dole, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick as witnesses. Dole and Kirkpatrick urged U.S. participation in a future NATO-led force, while Kissinger opposed it.

-- Late in the evening, U.S. envoy Holbrooke reported no change in the Yugoslav position regarding the peace agreement. Holbrooke departed Belgrade the following day.

03/11/99 -- The House of Representatives passed H.Con.Res. 42 by a vote of 219 to 191. The resolution authorized the President to deploy U.S. armed forces to Kosovo as part of a NATO peacekeeping operation, subject to several reporting requirements. The Administration opposed the timing of the congressional debate on the eve of resumed peace negotiations, although it welcomed the vote afterwards.

03/12/99 -- Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov and Greek Foreign Minister George Papandreou held talks with President Milosevic in Belgrade. The Russian and Greek officials expressed hope that their countries' close ties with Yugoslavia would prove useful to persuading Milosevic to accept the agreement. Russia remained opposed to NATO's threat of air strikes against Serbia. After the talks, Foreign Minister Ivanov announced that Belgrade "decisively and finally" rejected the possibility of a foreign military or police presence in Kosovo.

03/13/99 -- On the eve of another round of peace talks, at least six persons were killed and dozens injured after three bombs exploded in the towns of Podujevo (north of Pristina) and Kosovska Mitrovica (northwest of Pristina). The OSCE reported that the bombs were targeted at crowded public places, with the aim of inflicting the maximum amount of civilian casualties. Ethnic Albanians and Serbs blamed each other for the explosions.

03/15/99 -- On the opening day of the peace conference in Paris, the Kosovar Albanian delegation issued a letter to the French and British sponsors, and to Secretary of State Albright, that gave formal agreement to the accords. The letter said that the delegation "would be honored to sign the agreement in your presence at a time and place of your choosing."

03/16/99 -- A delegation from NATO joined the peace talks in Paris to discuss military implementation of the accords. NATO representatives had not been present during the negotiations at Rambouillet.

-- A Finnish forensic team issued a report on the January 1999 killing of over 40 ethnic Albanians in Racak. The team found that the victims were unarmed civilians killed in an organized fashion. The findings contradicted Serbian claims that victims were either armed rebels or civilians accidentally caught in cross-fire. The forensic team leader, Dr. Helena Ranta, called the killings a crime against humanity.

03/17/99 -- Negotiators at the Paris conference said that the talks were nearing deadlock. The Yugoslav delegation had submitted a long list of requested amendments to the accords, but refused to engage in talks on "implementation" of the agreement, according to western officials.

-- NATO SACEUR Gen. Wesley Clark and U.S. Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Walter Slocombe testified before the House Armed Services Committee on policy in the Balkans. In his testimony, Slocombe outlined U.S. interests at stake in the region.

03/18/99 -- Ethnic Albanian leaders -- Hashim Thaci, Ibrahim Rugova, Veton Surroi, and Rexhep Qosja — signed the Rambouillet accords in Paris. Secretary of State Albright, among others, congratulated the Albanian delegation on its decision and urged its members to stay united. In response, Serbian President Milutinovic called the Contact Group negotiations a “fraud” and warned that his country was prepared to fight against NATO attacks.

-- At a hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee, U.S. armed forces service chiefs spoke to the situation in Kosovo in terms of the threat environment in Serbia/Yugoslavia, the capabilities of allied fighter aircraft massed in the region, and likely phases of a NATO air campaign against the FRY.

03/19/99 -- The Paris conference co-chairs, French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine and British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, adjourned the peace talks, citing “no purpose” in extending the talks any further. The co-chairmen said that the conference would not resume until the Serbs expressed their acceptance of the accords.

-- In light of the failed negotiations, the OSCE Chair-in-Office Norwegian Foreign Minister Knut Vollebaek decided to withdraw the Kosovo Verification Mission from Kosovo immediately.

-- At a news conference, President Clinton stated that the Kosovo conflict threatened U.S. national interests. He warned that there would be more massacres if NATO did not act. He said that “action and resolve can stop armies and save lives.”

03/20/99 -- A Serb offensive against Srbica, a town in the Drenica region, northwest of Pristina, uprooted thousands of additional Kosovar Albanians. Nearly 1,400 OSCE verifiers were evacuated from Kosovo to Macedonia. OSCE mission chief Ambassador Walker said that the decision to withdraw the monitors demonstrated that NATO was serious about air strikes. Western officials estimated that Milosevic was taking advantage of the departure of the monitors by intensifying his offensive.

03/21/99 -- In Srbica, Yugoslav special forces executed 10 ethnic Albanians, according to western reports of witnesses’ accounts. Seven villages around Srbica were also shelled. Western media reported that Yugoslav army units were now being paired with Serbian Interior Ministry troops in their assaults. Nearby in Prekaz, where Kosovar Albanian Adem Jashari and his relatives were killed one year earlier, Serb forces burned the deserted town. Refugees continued to flee the area, mainly heading southward.

-- The Clinton Administration announced that it would send U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke to Belgrade on a last-ditch effort to end the violence in Kosovo and forestall NATO air strikes. Holbrooke stopped in Brussels en route to Belgrade to confer with NATO allies. The next day, Holbrooke said that all of the NATO allies agreed that they were on the brink of military action. NATO SACEUR announced that NATO forces were ready and prepared for such action.

03/22/99 -- NATO ambassadors expanded the authority of NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana to engage in air strikes against Serbia. The allies agreed to let Solana broaden air operations against Serb targets if necessary.

-- After meeting with President Milosevic for a number of hours in Belgrade, U.S. envoy Holbrooke reported no significant change in the Yugoslav leader's position. Holbrooke held a final "last chance" meeting with Milosevic the following day. Upon leaving Belgrade, Holbrooke called the situation the bleakest ever. But he invited Milosevic to change his mind, stating that "communications are always open even in times of conflict."

-- The Senate passed S.Con.Res. 21, by a vote of 58 in favor to 41 against. The resolution authorized the President to conduct military air operations and missile strikes against the FRY. The Senate withdrew from consideration amendments on a supplemental appropriations bill (S. 544) that would have imposed restrictions on the use of funds for the deployment of U.S. troops in the FRY.

03/23/99 -- After a telephone conversation on the Kosovo situation with U.S. Vice President Al Gore, Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov broke off his trip to the United States in mid-flight over the Atlantic Ocean, in protest of the imminent NATO air strikes, and returned to Moscow.

-- The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia declared a state of emergency throughout the country and called up thousands of armed forces reservists. Montenegro, junior partner in the Yugoslav federation, refused to recognize the declaration.

-- NATO Secretary-General Solana directed NATO SACEUR Gen. Clark to initiate air operations in the FRY.

03/24/99 -- NATO launched Operation *Determined Force* shortly after 8 p.m. local time. In this initial phase, NATO attacked Yugoslav military targets and air defense systems with cruise missiles and bombs. Thirteen of NATO's nineteen member states participated in the operation. Serbian officials reported strikes at about 40 targets throughout the country.

-- President Clinton gave two statements on Kosovo on national television. Clinton said that NATO air strikes would have three objectives: to demonstrate NATO's opposition to Serbian aggression; to deter President Milosevic from continuing his attacks on Kosovo's civilians; and to damage Serbia's capacity to wage war by diminishing its military capabilities. He said that "if President Milosevic will not make peace, we will limit his ability to make war."

-- Russia suspended cooperation with NATO and recalled its representative to the alliance from Brussels.

-- The House of Representatives adopted H.Res. 130 by a vote of 424 to 1 that expressed support for U.S. military personnel involved with the NATO air operation. S.Res. 74, adopted by the Senate on the same day, also expressed support for U.S. troops engaged in NATO military operations in the FRY.

03/25/99 -- In Skopje, Macedonia, an estimated 1,500 pro-Serb demonstrators attacked U.S. embassy facilities and vehicles. The demonstrators chanted anti-NATO and anti-U.S. slogans in response to the NATO air attacks on the FRY.

03/26/99 -- After two nights of air strikes, NATO reported that its aircraft and missiles had hit 50 Yugoslav targets. NATO's bombardment continued into its third day, with strikes being launched by daylight for the first time. Two Yugoslav MiG fighter jets were shot down by U.S. aircraft over Bosnia, where NATO maintains a peacekeeping force. Some NATO allies expressed anxiety over a possibly prolonged NATO air campaign. In public statements, Italian and Greek officials emphasized the need, in their view, to return to negotiations as soon as possible.

-- By a wide margin, the U.N. Security Council defeated a Russia-sponsored measure that would have demanded an immediate halt to the NATO air strikes. The resolution failed by a vote of 3 in favor (Russia, China, and Namibia) to 12 against.

03/27/99 -- NATO officials announced that the NATO bombing operation was moving to "phase two," with attacks targeted directly on Yugoslav troops, tanks, and other heavy weapons inside Kosovo itself and elsewhere in southern Serbia. Such attacks would require aircraft to fly at lower altitudes than previously. U.S. officials said that all NATO members supported broadening of the NATO air strikes.

-- A U.S. F-117 stealth fighter was downed in Yugoslavia, the first Allied loss in the four-day-old campaign. The lone pilot of the fighter was recovered by an elite rescue team. The cause of the crash could not be determined.

-- In a radio address to the nation, President Clinton said that NATO must continue its attacks on continued Serbia until President Milosevic accepts peace or until his capacity to make war is damaged. Other U.S. officials emphasized that the Administration had "no intention" of introducing ground troops into a combat situation in Kosovo, and the Defense Department said it was not planning for such a deployment.

03/28/99 -- Citing unnamed officials, the *New York Times* reported that the Administration had been caught off guard at the scale of the ethnic cleansing being conducted by Yugoslav and Serb forces in Kosovo. Officials reportedly said that the move to quicken the pace of the NATO air strikes was in response to President Milosevic's escalated rampage in Kosovo.

-- In Brussels, British Air Commodore David Wilby told reporters that the transition to phase two of the bombing campaign was just beginning. NATO and U.S. officials revealed few details on the expanded target list.

-- Columns of refugees streamed out of Kosovo into the neighboring republic of Montenegro, and to Albania and Macedonia, at much higher rates than before. Western officials reported that the majority of refugees arriving in these countries were women and children, and that Serb forces were burning the homes of the departing Kosovar Albanians. NATO spokesman Jamie Shea called the situation

a “humanitarian disaster.” Over five days, about 50,000 Kosovar civilians were forced to flee from their homes.

03/29/99 -- Russian President Boris Yeltsin ordered Prime Minister Primakov and other top government officials to Belgrade for talks with President Milosevic.

03/30/99 -- Russian Prime Minister Primakov held six hours of talks with Milosevic in Belgrade, and then traveled to Berlin to consult with German government officials. Primakov reported that Milosevic was ready to end the military campaign in Kosovo and return to political talks, but said that the NATO air attacks must end first. Western officials uniformly rejected the proposal.

-- NATO members agreed to “broaden and deepen” the target list of air strikes to include sites in downtown Belgrade. Some bombing runs were canceled due to bad weather. International officials now estimated the number of refugees created in the past week to be over 100,000. U.S. officials acknowledged that the NATO attacks had not yet deterred or prevented Belgrade from continuing its assaults in Kosovo.

-- In a speech at the State Department, President Clinton warned that continued aggression by Milosevic would result in the destruction of his military by NATO air strikes. He also stated that international support for Serbia’s claim to Kosovo would become increasingly jeopardized, signaling a potential policy shift on Kosovo’s final status.

03/31/99 -- Three U.S. soldiers in Macedonia came under fire during a patrol near the Macedonian border town of Kumanovo and went missing. NATO mounted search and rescue operations for several hours. The U.S. soldiers were subsequently captured by Yugoslav armed forces under uncertain circumstances.

-- NATO opened its expanded bombing campaign. The Defense Department reported that NATO strikes had hit the headquarters of the Yugoslav Army’s Special Unit Corps in downtown Belgrade.

-- Serbian police boarded hundreds of residents of Pristina were boarded onto trains heading toward the border with Macedonia. UNHCR estimated that, since March 24, over 100,000 persons from Kosovo had fled the province into the neighboring states of Montenegro, Albania, and Macedonia, with the number climbing hourly. From March 1998 and through March 1999, it estimated that well over 500,000 persons had become displaced by the Kosovo conflict.

-- Russia ordered a reconnaissance ship from its Black Sea fleet to the Mediterranean Sea.

-- President Clinton authorized an additional \$50 million to be made available to aid Kosovo refugees, of which \$25 million would come from refugee and migration assistance funds and \$25 from the Department of Defense. The United States would provide aircraft and other assets to support humanitarian aid airlift operations to the region.

Map



Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress, August 1998.

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